

Holmes's  
“The Chambered Nautilus”  
and  
Lincoln's  
Gettysburg Speech

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LUCY ADELLA SLOAN

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Holmes's  
“The Chambered Nautilus”  
and  
Lincoln's  
Gettysburg Speech

A STUDY AND INTERPRETATION

WITH PRELIMINARY COMMENTS, NOTES,  
AND QUESTIONS

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## SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF HOLMES

"Perhaps more than any other American poet Holmes has been loved for himself more than for his poetry."—G. W. Cooke.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, author of "The Chambered Nautilus," poet, scientist, physician, lecturer, teacher, novelist, biographer, wit, humorist, and essayist, was born at Cambridge, Massachusetts, August 29, 1809, and died in Boston, October 7, 1894. His life, with the exception of two visits abroad, was spent in or near the city of Boston. He had several years of training in private schools, four years in Harvard University, from which he graduated in the year 1829, one year in the Harvard Law School, two years in a Boston Medical School, and spent three years in the study of medicine in Paris. After his return to America he practiced medicine in Boston, lectured on anatomy at Dartmouth College, and in 1847 accepted a call to the professorship of anatomy in Harvard University, in which position he continued for thirty-six years. During all this time he kept up, to some extent, his medical practice, lectured often on the lyceum platform in various towns and cities, extended his scientific studies, made a number of important inventions, among them being the stereoscope in its present form, wrote for medical journals, maintained his place as one of the highest authorities in the country on questions of medical theory and practice, read a poem at every anniversary of his Harvard graduating class, as well as for every occasion of note in Boston or Harvard University, and was all the time pouring forth a flood of wit and wisdom in conversations, lectures, and writing, both in prose and poetry, that amazed and delighted his readers and hearers. He was in demand everywhere for the sake of his poems, which it was said to be a never-to-be-forgotten treat to hear him recite, and for the sake of the continual flow of interest in his brilliant, witty talk. His activity and power of accomplishing work were marvelous. In 1857 he helped to found the *Atlantic Monthly*, named it, and was for many years one of its regular

contributors. During the first year of its existence he contributed to the magazine the twelve articles which were afterward published under the title, *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*. This is considered his greatest work, and it gave him wide fame as a writer. His collected poems fill at least two good-sized volumes, and his prose works almost make a library in themselves. The Autocrat Series consists of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, *The Poet at the Breakfast Table*, *The Professor at the Breakfast Table*, and *Over the Teacups*, published in his eightieth year. He wrote three novels, *Elsie Venner*, *The Guardian Angel*, and *A Mortal Antipathy*; two biographies, a Life of Emerson, and a Life of John Lothrop Motley; and a great number of medical and general essays, which were collected and published in volumes. Some of his best-known poems are given below.

*Humorous poems*.—“The One-Hoss Shay,” “The Height of the Ridiculous,” “The Comet,” “The Music Grinders,” “How the Old Horse Won the Bet,” “The Ballad of the Oysterman,” “The September Gale,” “The Spectre Pig,” “The Broomstick Train,” etc., etc.

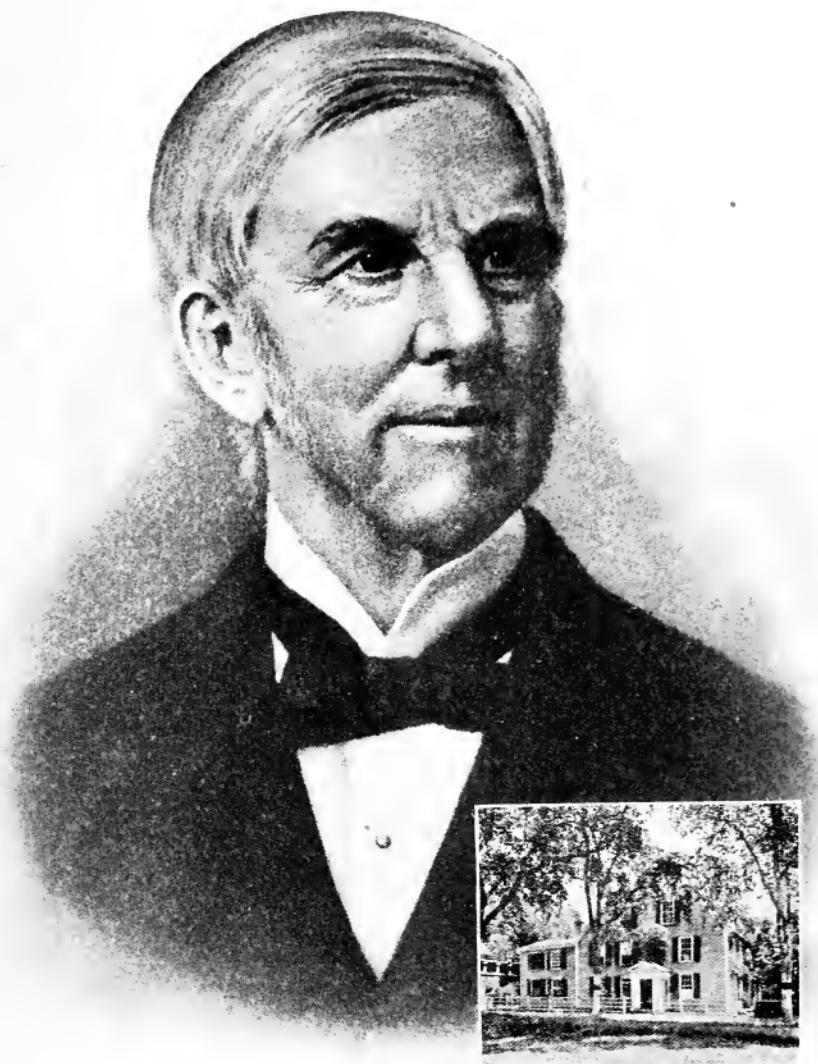
*Serious poems*.—“The Chambered Nautilus,” “The Last Leaf” (humorous and pathetic), “The Voiceless,” “Under the Violets,” etc.

*Patriotic poems*.—“Old Ironsides,” “Voyage of the Good Ship Union,” “God Save the Flag,” “Union and Liberty,” “Grandmother’s Story of Bunker Hill,” “Our Yankee Girls,” etc.

*Hymns*.—“Lord of All Being, Throned Afar,” “O Lord of Hosts! Almighty King,” “O Love Divine, That Stooped to Share,” “Angel of Peace, Thou Hast Wandered Too Long!” etc.

*Anniversary poems for the Class of ’29*.—“The Boys,” “Bill and Joe,” “A Song of Twenty-Nine,” “The Old Man Dreams,” “Remember—Forget,” etc.

It will be seen that one of the remarkable things about Holmes is his astonishing capacity for work, and the high excellence he reached in every field of his endeavor. As a teacher he was so popular that his students welcomed him to his classroom with cheers. “But the instruction,” writes one of his students, “deep, sound, and thorough, was there all the same, and we never



OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES  
HIS BIRTHPLACE, THE GAMBREL-ROOFED HOUSE

left the room without feeling what a fund of knowledge and what a clear insight upon difficult points in medical science had been imparted to us through the sparkling medium." As a lecturer he was in constant demand. Of Holmes as a reader and reciter Curtis says, "Holmes's readings were like improvisations. The poems were expressed and interpreted by the whole personality of the poet. The most subtle touch of thought, the melody of fond regret, the brilliant passage of description, the culmination of latent fun exploding in a keen and resistless jest—all these were vivified in the sensitive play of manner and modulation of tone of the reader, so that a poem by Holmes at the Harvard Commencement dinner was one of the anticipated delights which never failed." His writings, both in prose and verse, have been eagerly and widely read. "I am confident," says Judge Hoar, "that no writer since Walter Scott has given so much pleasure to so many English-speaking people as he." Curtis says that all his countrymen are his lovers, and Smalley, writing of Holmes in England, says, "He had great renown in England, where his readers were numbered by hundreds of thousands."

Another remarkable trait about Holmes was his ready wit and humor. He set the whole English-speaking world off into smiles and laughter. Lowell, in his "Fable for Critics" says,

"There's Holmes, who is matchless among you for wit,  
A Leyden-jar always full-charged, from which flit  
The electrical tinges of hit after hit."

He has been called, "our laughing philosopher," "our wise and witty poet." It is said that his wife's face always wore a remarkably pleasant expression, acquired from laughing so much at her husband's wit.

Holmes was an apostle of contentment. He loved his home, his work, his classes, his university, his city, his country. He delighted in his family, he delighted in his friends, among whom were included practically every name of note in America. His own great friendliness and kindness made all men his friends.

Dr. Holmes not only loved the social gatherings where he met his friends, but he loved life itself—just the mere physical fact of being alive gave him joy. His food, his exercise, a walk through

the city, a row on the river, the sight of a great tree, for he loved all trees; a drive in his own "one-hoss shay"—from all these he gathered pleasure and contentment.

And well may life have been a satisfaction to him, for if ever a man seemed born under a lucky star, he was the man. The very year of his birth was favorable to genius, for that same year gave to the world Lincoln, Gladstone, Poe, Tennyson, Mrs. Browning, Darwin, and Mendelssohn. Holmes was fortunate in his ancestry. His father, a graduate of Yale and himself an author of considerable note, was a Congregational minister in Cambridge, and his mother was a woman of fine training and noble Christian character. On his father's side there were several who had made the name of Holmes well known and respected long before the poet arrived on the scene to make it immortal, while on his mother's side might be found a Supreme Court judge, a colonial governor or two, the first New England poetess, Mrs. Anne Bradstreet, and several of the most influential names in New England history. Wendell Phillips, the orator and reformer, was a cousin of Holmes on his mother's side.

To the help of this fortunate inheritance, as we have seen, there was added every advantage of education and environment to make Holmes the great and good and useful man he was. He resigned his professorship in his seventy-second year. The remainder of his life, passed, for the most part, among his family and friends in Boston, was full of honors, activity, usefulness, and enjoyment. He died at the age of eighty-five years.

"Who else wears so many crowns as he—the irresistible humorist and wit; the liberal, bold, profound, and subtle thinker; the poet, the essayist, the novelist; the man of science; the consummate teacher; the skilful physician; the unselfish patriot; the honest, faithful, tender friend?"—Young.

## PRELIMINARY COMMENTS

### A. FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE POEM IN PRINT

"The Chambered Nautilus" made its first appearance in print in the year 1858, in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly*. This article was one of a series which Holmes contributed to the magazine

during that year. They were afterward published in a volume entitled, *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*. An autocrat is a monarch who rules with an absolute authority supposed to be vested entirely in himself. The book is a sort of half-story, with the scene laid in a supposed boarding-house in Boston. The supposed boarders, aside from the Autocrat, are designated as "the divinity student," "the old gentleman opposite," "the lady boarder," "the young lady" (sent to the city to be finished off for the duties of life), "the landlady," "the landlady's daughter," Benjamin Franklin (the landlady's youngest), "the actor" (professional ruffian at a neighboring theater), "the schoolmistress," "the young fellow called John," and others. The Autocrat rules and directs and monopolizes the conversation, addressing his remarks to the other boarders, and occasionally allowing them to reply. The opinions expressed by the Autocrat are of course the opinions of Holmes himself, and all varieties of topics are discussed, such as a visit to the Coliseum, the late comet, hysterics, the uses of dandies, the crow and the king-bird, self-made men, race horses, mistakes in grammar, Danish pirates, etc. One morning the Autocrat said to the boarders, "Did I not say to you a little while ago that the universe swam in an ocean of similitudes and analogies? I will not quote Cowley, or Burns, or Wordsworth, just now, to show you what thoughts were suggested to them by the simplest natural objects, such as a flower or a leaf; but I will read you a few lines, if you do not object, suggested by looking at a section of one of those chambered shells to which is given the name of Pearly Nautilus. We need not trouble ourselves about the distinction between this and the Paper Nautilus, the Argonauta of the ancients. The name applied to both shows that each has long been compared to a ship, as you may see more fully in *Webster's Dictionary*, or the encyclopedia to which he refers. If you will look in Roget's *Bridgewater Treatise*, you will find a figure of one of these shells and a section of it. The last will show you the series of enlarging compartments successively dwelt in by the animal that inhabits the shell, which is built in a widening spiral. Can you find no lesson in this?" The Autocrat then read the poem to the boarders.

**B. HOW THE POEM WAS SUGGESTED AND CREATED**

On page 13 is a picture of the object Holmes says he was looking at when the thought of writing "The Chambered Nautilus" first came into his mind. Many of our best-loved poems have been suggested to their authors, as this one was to Holmes, by the sight of some apparently insignificant object. A wild duck flying across the sunset sky inspired the writing of Bryant's "To a Waterfowl," a mouse running away from its ruined nest which Burns had unintentionally destroyed with his plow caused the writing of his "To a Mouse," the sight of a broken and crushed floweret produced his beautiful "To a Mountain Daisy," and the well-known lines,

"Oh wad some power the giftie gie us,  
To see ousrels as ithers see us!  
It wad frae mony a blunder free us,  
And foolish notion,"

are from a poem suggested by the sight of a louse crawling on a lady's bonnet. Not only Wordsworth, Cowley, and Burns, spoken of by the Autocrat to the boarders, but many other poets, both English and American, have gained inspiration for their best poetry from what Holmes calls "simple natural objects." The reason for this is the fact stated above by the Autocrat to the boarders, that the "universe swims in an ocean of similitudes and analogies." Nearly every created thing in nature seems meant to be a type of some spiritual truth or condition—seems, to him that has eyes to see and ears to hear, to be trying to reveal to humanity the thoughts of the Creator of the universe. "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge." The hard, cold stone typifies the human heart void of pity, the ever-changing cloud tells of the transitory nature of gloom and sorrow, the beauty of vegetation, flower, and sky suggest Infinite Love, and daylight after darkness, spring after winter, the growth of vegetation after its apparent death, continually suggest immortal life. It is a large part of the poet's business to perceive these analogies and reveal them to us in the language of melody and beauty that we call poetry. Holmes gives the following descrip-

tion of the process by which he discovered these resemblances and embodied them in poetry. As this account is given immediately after he makes the Autocrat read to the boarders "*The Chambered Nautilus*," we may suppose it is a description of the way that poem was created.

"A lyric conception . . . hits me like a bullet in the forehead. I have often had the blood drop from my cheeks when it struck, and felt

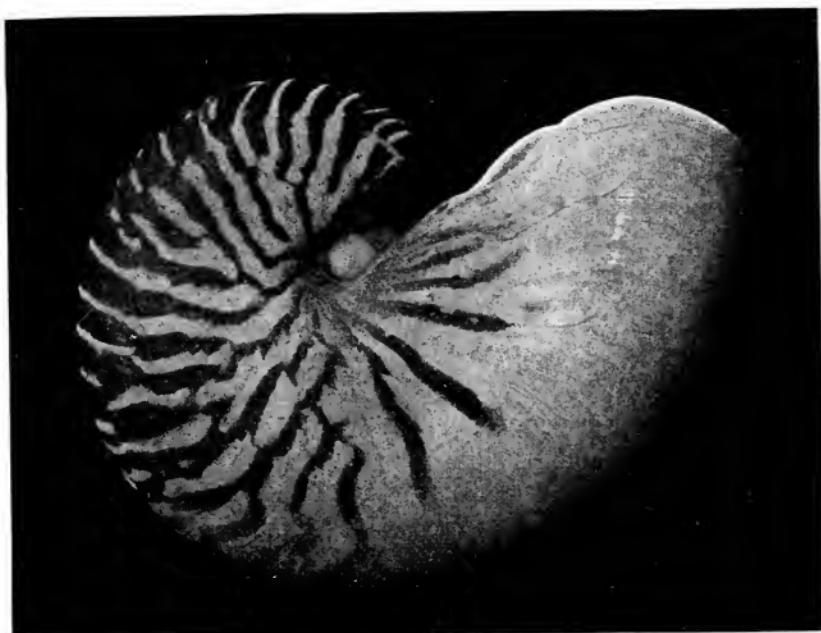


FIG. 1.—THE OUTSIDE OF A NAUTILUS SHELL

that I turned as white as death. Then comes a creeping as of centipedes running down the spine, then a gasp and a great jump of the heart, then a sudden flush and a beating in the vessels of the head, then a long sigh, and the poem is written. . . . I said written, not copied. Every such poem has a soul and body, and it is the body of it, or the copy, that men read and publishers pay for. The soul of it is born in an instant in the poet's soul. It comes to him a thought, tangled in the meshes of a few sweet words, words that have loved each other from the cradle of the language, but have never been wedded until now. Whether it will ever fully embody itself in a bridal train of a dozen stanzas or not

is uncertain; but it exists potentially from the instant when the poet turns pale with it. It is enough to stun and scare anybody, to have a hot thought come crashing into his brain, and plowing up those ruts where the wagon trains of common ideas were jogging along in their regular sequence of association."

### C. THE NAUTILUS AND ITS SHELL

The chambered or pearly nautilus is one of the wonderful little creatures of the sea. It is a shell-fish, and belongs to a family which was once very numerous and existed in many varieties, most of which, however, have gradually died out. As they were such a numerous family the shells were sometimes washed up on the shore in time of storm. It was the inner part of one of these shells which had been cut in two in the middle, as shown in Fig. 3, which Holmes was looking at when he wrote the poem. These shells are sometimes seven or eight inches across, and weigh several ounces. Fig. 2 is a picture of a shell which has been cut in two, leaving the pulpy little body of the nautilus exposed, just as it lives, in the outer cavity of the shell, with its head and tentacles protruding out into the sea. They can be withdrawn within the shell in case of an attack by an enemy. If you can imagine the other half of the shell replaced in its original position, you have a pretty good idea of the little house or ship in which the nautilus lives. Its body lies, as shown in Fig. 2, close against the curved partition which separates it from the vacated chambers. This partition is smooth, saucer-like, and solid, with the exception of the tiny opening through which the cord passes which extends from the body of the nautilus to the middle of the shell. As the body increases in size, the rear portion of its chamber just in front of the partition becomes uncomfortably tight, so the little creature "hunches" itself forward in its shell, and builds a new partition which again entirely separates it from all the chambers in which it has lived before. This ceaseless labor and ceaseless progress of the silent little builder down in the depths of the sea was a type-idea for human soul-builders to imitate which struck Holmes "like a bullet in the middle of the forehead," and produced for us the inspiring poem.

*Classification.*—The poem is a lyric. As it is a meditation on a "simple, natural object," it may be further classified as a meditative nature lyric.

*Meter.*—The prevailing foot is iambic. The first, fourth, and fifth lines have each five iambic feet, hence they are iambic pentameter lines; the second, third, and sixth have three iambic feet

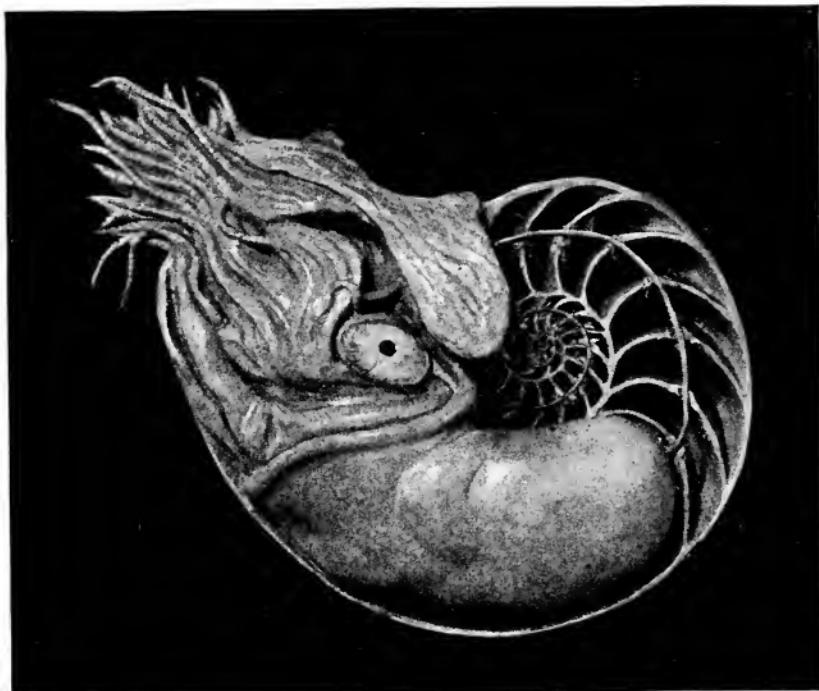


FIG. 2.—View of the inside of a nautilus shell which has been sawed open a little to one side of the middle. Notice the bony tube through which a cord runs from the body of the nautilus to the first tiny chamber.

each and are iambic trimeter lines; the last line has six iambic feet and is a hexameter or Alexandrine line.

*Suggestions of the sea in the poem.*—As the nautilus is a creature of the deep, it is fitting that the imagery and language of a poem about it should suggest the atmosphere of the sea. The poet makes the living nautilus a ship; the dead nautilus is the same

ship wrecked. The mythological allusions are all to ancient divinities of the sea: to the sirens and their song, to Triton blowing his horn, and to the mermaids sunning their hair. Even the stanza, with its arrangement of long and short lines ending with the long hexameter line, seems to suggest the incoming and breaking of waves upon the shore.

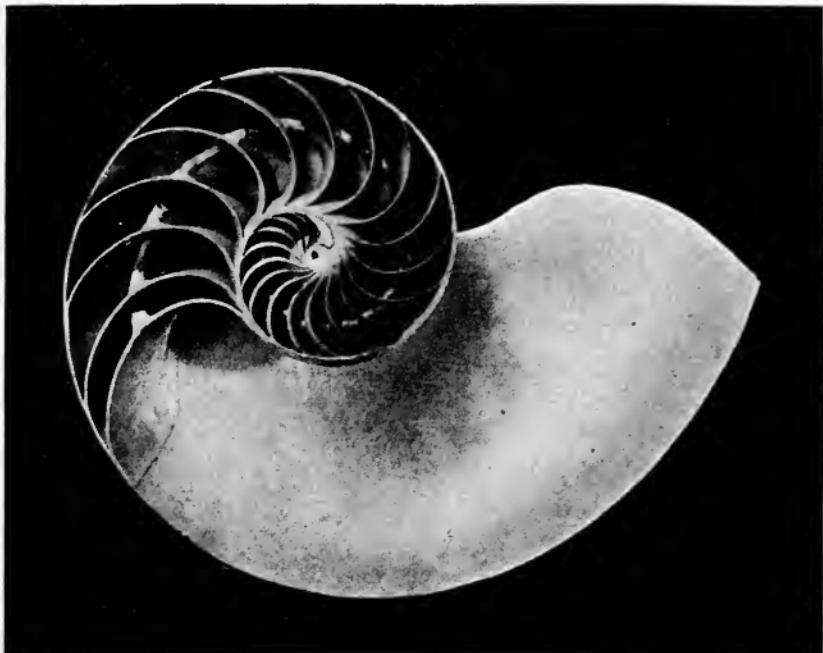


FIG. 3.—View of nautilus shell which has been cut open so as to show the body of the nautilus lying in the outer chamber of the shell.

*Organization and outline of the thought of the poem.*—The meditator or speaker in the poem seems to be contemplating, not a smoothly cut, clean shell as shown in Fig. 3, but a shell roughly broken by the sea in such a way as to show its entire inner structure. The first three stanzas are devoted to the shell and its builder, the last two to what Holmes calls the “lesson.” Stanza one is an imaginary picture of the living nautilus sailing enchanted seas, stanza two is a statement of its present wrecked and broken condition, stanza three is a history of the building of the shell,

stanza four expresses thanks for the message and states the clearness with which it comes, and stanza five gives the message.

*Theme.*—The theme is the nautilus and its shell; the central thought is the idea of intellectual and spiritual growth through self-effort.

*Suggestions for the study of the poem.*—The teacher should, weeks before beginning work with the class, commit the poem to memory, study it, get in love with it and enthusiastic over it. Do as one of Holmes's relatives did: repeat it along with "Now I Lay Me" before going to sleep at night. Practice making a drawing of Fig. 3 on the blackboard. Then, with the drawing on the board give a few interesting and necessary facts about the nautilus; tell briefly who wrote the poem; then, with all fervor and expression, recite it to the class. Do all this, if possible, before the pupils have seen the poem. Then put the books in their hands and work with them with questions, notes, and pictures on the meaning of the poem itself, leaving work on the meter, classification, author, etc., till later. As soon as they get the meaning of the stanzas, have them committed to memory. Be sure that every pupil learns it so thoroughly that it will remain a sure possession for life.

"A notable poem, indeed, in every respect; in beauty of imagery, in construction, and in the lyric sweep and lofty aspiration of its oft-quoted final stanza."—Newcomer.

"That poem is booked for immortality."—Whittier.

"'The Chambered Nautilus' is perfect as a beautiful embodiment of a noble thought."—Bronson.

"'The Chambered Nautilus,' unlike most of Holmes's poems, was written with a deeper purpose than mere sentiment."—Halleck.

"In writing the poem I was filled with a better feeling—the highest state of mental exaltation and the most crystalline clairvoyance, as it seemed to me—I mean that lucid vision of one's thought, and of all the forms of expression which will be at once precise and musical, which is the poet's special gift, however large or small in amount."—Holmes.

"'The Chambered Nautilus' is a favorite poem of mine, even if I did write it myself."—Holmes.

## THE CHAMBERED NAUTILUS

This is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,  
 Sails the unshadowed main,—  
 The venturous bark that flings  
 On the sweet summer wind its purpled wings  
 In gulfs enchanted, where the siren sings,  
 And coral reefs lie bare,  
 Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their streaming hair.

Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl;  
 Wrecked is the ship of pearl!  
 And every chambered cell,  
 Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell,  
 As the frail tenant shaped his growing shell,  
 Before thee lies revealed,—  
 Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt unsealed!

Year after year beheld the silent toil  
 That spread his lustrous coil;  
 Still, as the spiral grew,  
 He left the past year's dwelling for the new,  
 Stole with soft step its shining archway through,  
 Built up its idle door,  
 Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no more.

Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,  
 Child of the wandering sea,  
 Cast from her lap forlorn!  
 From thy dead lips a clearer note is born  
 Than ever Triton blew from wreathèd horn!  
 While on mine ear it rings,  
 Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that sings:—

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,  
 As the swift seasons roll!  
 Leave thy low-vaulted past!  
 Let each new temple, nobler than the last,  
 Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,  
 Till thou at length art free,  
 Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea.

## NOTES

## STANZA ONE

Look up the word "nautilus" in *Webster's Dictionary* and study the illustrations given.

*This*.—The word shell is understood after the word "This," as, This shell is, etc.

*Ship of pearl*.—This expression begins a metaphor comparing the shell to a ship. It extends throughout this stanza and two lines of the next, and is shown in the use of the words "sails," "bark," "wings," "wrecked."

*Poets feign*.—Feign means "imagine" or "pretend." Pope, an English poet, in one of his poems says,

"Learn of the little nautilus to sail,  
Spread the thin oar, and catch the driving gale."

But it was seamen and the scientists who gave the nautilus a name from a word meaning "sailor" or "ship," in the belief that the little animal hoisted a gauzy membrane and used it as a sail.

*Unshadowed*.—Unshaded by clouds.

*Main*.—Ocean. The "unshadowed main" is the calm, stormless, sunlit sea.

*Bark*.—A small sailing vessel. It was "venturous" for the tiny ship of pearl to set sail even on stormless seas.

*Flings*.—Recklessly or impulsively spreads its sails.

*Sweet*.—A metaphor comparing the agreeableness of the wind to the agreeableness of a sweet taste. It suggests a soft, fragrant, velvety breeze.

*Purpled*.—This doubtless refers to the darkening in color and blending in with the changing blues and purples of the sea which atmospheric conditions sometimes cause on warm seas. Or it may refer to the iridescent coloring of the gauzy membrane which the nautilus was thought to use for a sail.

*Gulfs enchanted*, etc.—If Holmes had any definite location in mind as the scene of the voyage of the ship of pearl, there are several things which suggest that it may have been the Mediterranean Sea. This sea was a favorite home of the nautilus; the Sirens were said to have lived there on an island near Sicily, and Triton and the sea-maids sported in its waters. The "sweet summer wind" also bears out this suggestion. "Enchanted" means bewitched, charmed, placed under a spell. So the use of this term really puts the voyage of the little ship in the fairy land, or sea, of nowhere.

*Sirens.*—In Greek mythology the Sirens were anciently said to be half-women and half-birds, but later were said to be women living on a rocky island to which, with an enchanting song, they lured sea-voyagers only to destroy them. See *Century Dictionary* for picture.

*Sea-maid.*—Mermaid.

#### STANZA TWO

The metaphor comparing the shell to a ship ends with the second line of this stanza. In the third line a new one begins, which by the use of the words “cell,” “tenant,” “ceiling,” “crypt,” compares the shell to a building.

*Webs of living gauze.*—The gauzy membrane which the nautilus was supposed to use for a sail.

*Dim dreaming life.*—The nautilus lives a quiet, inactive life down in the cold depths of the sea. It moves about but little, is fastened to its shell, and dreams away its time in waiting and watching for food and in enlarging its shell. The poet calls this a “dim, dreaming life.” You may be helped in getting his meaning by comparing this life with that of some active animal on the earth, such as a squirrel or a dog.

*Was wont.*—Was accustomed.

*Frail tenant.*—The nautilus.

*Irised ceiling.*—Iris, in Greek mythology, was the goddess of the rainbow. The “ceiling” is the rounded inner side or lining of the shell. It is said to be “irisèd” because it shows some of the colors of the rainbow.

*Crypt.*—A crypt is an underground cell or vault, especially one under a church. The word crypt here refers to the dark tiny cell in the very middle of the shell into which the light cannot penetrate. The shell is now so badly broken that even this cell is “unsealed.”

#### STANZA THREE

*Year after year.*—Personification. The years are represented as looking on at the toil of the nautilus.

*Lustrous coil.*—The shell.

*Still.*—All the while, continuously.

*Shining archway.*—The curved inner side of the ceiling of the shell, just in front of the last partition.

*Idle.*—Useless.

*Door.*—The partition between the cells.

*Child of the wandering sea.*—This line personifies both the nautilus and the sea. The nautilus is the child, the sea is the mother.

*Dead lips.*—The broken shell.

*A clearer note is born.*—A clearer message or lesson is suggested.

*Triton.*—In Greek mythology Triton was the trumpeter of the great god Neptune, and preceded him on his journeys over the deep. The note of his horn had to be loud and clear, as it must sound out so as to be heard above the roar of winds and waves.

*Wreathed horn.*—Triton's horn was a twisted or spiral sea-shell. See illustration in Webster's *Dictionary*.

#### STANZA FIVE

The mansions of the first line, the low-vaulted past (or low-roofed place) of the third line, the temples of the fourth and fifth lines, and the outgrown shell of the last line all stand for limitations and hindrances to the soul in its efforts to make itself larger and better. Ignorance, selfishness, envy, prejudice, dishonesty, they stand for these, and for anything else that makes a soul small, mean, and unworthy. As the nautilus, as its body grows, must enlarge its shell or die, so the soul, if it is to grow, must overcome and drive away its limitations or it will grow smaller and die. Therefore to "build more stately mansions" is to be confined less and less with limitations; to leave a "low-vaulted past" is to leave behind what has kept the soul small. The advance of the soul as it overcomes its limitations and becomes more God-like is symbolized by newly built temples, each nobler than the last, each one limiting the soul less and less because each has a more and more lofty dome, until at last the "outgrown shell," or all these limitations, are left behind and the soul has reached perfect freedom.

*Shut thee from heaven.*—Many students of the poem have trouble in getting the poet's meaning in this expression. Heaven, as used here, does not mean the abode of the blessed. It means the sky. Each new temple, the poet says, limits the soul less than the last one did because it covers its occupant—shuts him from the stormy sky—with a more lofty dome.

*Thine outgrown shell.*—This must not be taken to mean the body after the soul has left it. It symbolizes outgrown hindrances to soul-growth, such as ignorance and sin.

*Life's unresting sea.*—A metaphor symbolizing our human life.

## INTERPRETATION

## STANZA ONE

Holmes, looking at the broken shell, seems to recall the legend of the gauzy wings used for sails, and, to make the picture it suggests complete, he groups with it three other beautiful myths of the sea, the myth of the Sirens and their song, the myth of enchanted waters, and the myth of mermaids sunning their hair. This, thinks the poet, looking at the broken shell, is the ship of pearl which, poets imagine, sails on stormless, sunlit seas—the venturesome little bark that boldly spreads its sails to the warm, fragrant winds in enchanted gulfs where siren music sounds and sea-maids sun their hair.

## STANZA TWO

Here is presented a direct contrast to the living beauty of stanza one. The ship of pearl is broken, wrecked, deserted. Its gay sails may never more be spread to the soft winds; every cell in which the little nautilus lived as he built his shell is open; the shell is so broken that its innermost structure is revealed.

## STANZA THREE

But it is not the imagined picture of the first stanza or the contrast of the second that has flashed the central truth of the poem into the author's mind and caused it to be written. This comes from the contemplation of its inner structure which its wrecking has revealed. (See Fig. 3.) The poet thinks of the years of toil put upon the building of this shell by the silent little laborer down in the cold depths of the sea; of how, as each compartment grew too small, in order to have more room to grow he patiently extended again his ceiling, moved forward in his shell, built up a new partition of pearl behind him, "Stretched in his last-found home and knew the old no more."

## STANZA FOUR

Greatly moved and aroused by the thoughts that have come to him from the contemplation of the silent, steady, progressive

toil of the little laborer of the sea, the poet speaks directly to it the apostrophe of stanza four, in which he says and implies something like the following: Forlorn little child of the sea, cast out by thy wandering, restless mother, I thank thee for the message sent by heaven to me through thee. It comes to me now more clearly than any note that ever sounded out above wave and wind from the horn of old Triton, trumpeter of the sea. As it sounds through and through my mind, the voice of the aroused higher nature within me says to my soul, etc.

#### STANZA FIVE

Expressed through figures, the message which the voice gives is something like this: As the nautilus toils steadily to give its body more space for growth each year, do thou labor, O my soul, to give thyself room for growth, to drive back all limitations and hindrances—labor like the nautilus to make continual progress, leave behind thee everything that has kept thee small and low of stature, until, at last, all limitations are outgrown and thou hast reached the perfect freedom of a soul in harmony with its highest ideal and with God. (See also Notes.)

The metaphor here used does not, as in the other stanzas, compare the shell to a building. It compares the process of soul-growth to the process of a rich builder who erects for himself one mansion after another, each new one more vast and stately than the last, or to that of a worshiper who continually requires for himself more and more noble temples in which to serve his God.

#### QUESTIONS

Name the author of the poem. Give a favorable comment concerning him. What state has the honor of being his birthplace? What city was his residence throughout almost all of his life? What university graduated him? Where is it? Show how Holmes was fortunate in his ancestry. In his home. In his opportunities for education. In the place where he grew up and spent his life. Give two or three ways in which he was remarkable. Name six of his poems aside from "The Chambered Nautilus." For what great magazine did he write many articles? Name six of his best-known prose works. When and where

did "The Chambered Nautilus" first appear in print? Give a brief account of the book entitled *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*. What kind of poem is "The Chambered Nautilus"? The stanza has how many different lines as to length? Name the meter of each of the different kinds of lines. What "simple natural object" caused the writing of the poem? Name some other poems that had their origin in "simple natural objects." What does the dictionary say about the origin of the word "nautilus"? Could the central thought of this poem have been suggested to the poet by looking at the outside of a nautilus shell?

What is the first stanza all about? The second? The third? The fourth? The fifth? When you have answered these questions you have outlined the poem. Commit this outline to memory.

#### STANZA ONE

What word must be understood with the word "this" of the first line in order to make the meaning clear? The shell is called a ship. All the rest of stanza one and the first two lines of stanza two are taken up in describing this imaginary ship. When an object suggests another so strongly that the real object is declared or asserted to be the suggested object, the figure is called a metaphor. This figure is used more than any other in the poem. Meaning of "feign"? Of "main"? Of "unshadowed main"? Of "venturous"? Of "bark"? Why is the bark called venturous? The use of the word "flings" gives what character to the action of the nautilus? What figure in the use of the word "wings," line four, for sails? Why called "purpled wings"? Find out all that the dictionary says about "enchant," "enchanted," "enchantment." The five lines of the stanza give a scene of enchantment. What four myths or legends of the sea are used in making this scene? What are sirens? What are meant by sea-maids?

#### STANZA TWO

Stanza two is all about what? What has become of the purple sails? What has happened to the ship of pearl? How completely is it wrecked? In what sense is the word "wont" used? Where does the comparison change from a ship to a building? In line five who is said to have built the shell? What part of the whole shell is meant by the ceiling? By the crypt? Why must the shell be imagined to be so badly broken that its entire inner structure is revealed in order that the rest of the poem may be written? What instance of alliteration is found in the fourth line of stanza two?

## STANZA THREE

What are personified in the first line of stanza three? What proves that the building of the shell was a long process rather than a short one? What little character touch is in the fact that this long toil was also "silent toil"? "Still" in line three is used in what sense? What is a spiral? "The past year's dwelling" sounds as if the nautilus lives in each chamber just a year. It is no doubt used by the poet, however, to denote an indefinite period of time, as it is probable that no one knows just how long it takes the nautilus to outgrow its cells. Are these long years of silent toil carried on alone, that is, does the nautilus receive any outside help? In what sense is the word "still" used in line three? What and where is the "shining archway"? What beautiful example of alliteration is in the stanza?

## STANZA FOUR

It is the meditation in which stanza that brings the "message" to the mind of the poet? This entire stanza is addressed to what? This makes it what figure of speech? The use of the apostrophe indicates strong emotion on the part of the poet. What punctuation in the stanza also indicates emotion? What has aroused this emotion in the poet? What adjective is used in line one to describe the message the nautilus brings? And the heavenly message is brought by means of the poor little wrecked, broken shell. Could the shell have brought the message if it had not been wrecked? How is the nautilus personified in the second line? And what is personified as the mother? What has the mother done to her child? Who is "forlorn," the child or the mother? Who is Triton? Why must his note be particularly loud and clear? Why "wreathèd horn"? What or whose is the "voice that sings"? To what or whom does it speak?

## STANZA FIVE

What in line two indicates that the process of making the soul greater and better takes a long time? What in line six carries out the same idea? Also the figures used indicate the same thing, as the building of stately mansions and of more and more lofty temples must be the work of much time. So it is the work of a lifetime that the last stanza suggests. Through whose effort, as shown in stanza three, is the shell of the nautilus built? Through whose effort, as shown in stanza five, does the soul grow greater and better?

## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

"Men call him the typical American, the man of the people, the noblest product of American civilization. He is all that; but, as time goes on, and the real truth of his marvelous life comes to light, the world, and you, too, boys and girls, upon whom depends the future of the Republic he saved from ruin and the people he made anew, will carry him in your hearts and hail him in your speech as, before all others, *the American—the greatest, wisest, noblest, truest man of the nineteenth century.*"—

E. S. Brooks.

"Standing like a tower,  
Our children shall behold his fame,  
The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing man,  
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,  
New birth of our new soil, the first American."  
—Lowell's "Commemoration Ode."

Abraham Lincoln, the man who saved America."—E. S. Brooks.

*Contrast between the opportunities of Lincoln and those of Holmes.*—The two men whose inspired words have been selected by the State Board of Education for study in the eighth grades of the schools of Michigan for the year 1915 were both born in the same year, 1809, Lincoln on February 12 of that year, Holmes on August 29. But here all similarity in their circumstances ended. No two men could have been selected for study whose surroundings and opportunities present a more direct contrast. For this very reason the study of their lives is an inspiration, for one of them may be said to have become great in spite of advantages, the other in spite of disadvantages. Holmes was born where American civilization had reached its high-water mark, in the midst of schools, churches, lecture-halls, art-galleries, and museums, near America's greatest university and most cultured city. Lincoln's birthplace was a hillside cabin in a lonely clearing in the midst of the far-spreading woods of Kentucky—a clearing "rocky, weedy, and scrubby"—a cabin "dark and cold, doorless, floorless, windowless, with the chilling wind whistling through the crevices of its rough walls." Holmes's father was a minister, and their



STATUE OF LINCOLN BY ST. GAUDENS, IN LINCOLN PARK, CHICAGO  
LINCOLN'S BIRTHPLACE

home a resort of preachers of the gospel. When Lincoln's mother died, neither doctor nor minister could be obtained, until the sorrowing boy, grieving that his mother should have no funeral, using a fly-leaf from his spelling-book for paper and pokeberry juice for ink, wrote a letter to a backwoods preacher which so touched his heart that he traveled a hundred miles through the pathless woods, and arrived, long after her death, to preach a sermon to the family and neighbors by the side of the lonely grave. Holmes spent practically the first twenty-seven years of his life in the best schools of the world; Lincoln's entire schooling was obtained in less than a year and in schools kept in floorless cabins, by teachers who themselves could scarcely more than read and write. Yet Lincoln was able to extract from these seeming disadvantages just the right kind of training to fit him to win the reverence of the civilized world and play his great part in the advancement of mankind.

*Sketch of Lincoln's early life.*—Hundreds of books have been written about Abraham Lincoln, and no American boy or girl ought to grow up without reading several of them. But those who are going to study the Gettysburg Speech are asked to study also the little sketch of his early life here given and see if they are not willing to agree that there were, after all, many things in his early training which helped him to become a strong, honest, self-reliant, sympathetic man. In order to show his honesty, the story is often told of how he walked miles to return to a woman a few cents after he had made a mistake in making change. But his own hard experience in needing money which he could not get taught him how much a few cents might mean to a woman also poor. The very lack of opportunities for education made his eager, hungry mind grasp every slightest chance of obtaining knowledge; by being obliged to turn over all the money he earned to his father he learned in the best possible way that if he was to share the benefits of an institution, like the home, he must also help bear its burdens; and his twenty-one years in his father's home, sharing its joys and sorrows, hardships and responsibilities with his parents and brothers and sisters, was invaluable training in humanity and sympathy.

The first eight years of his life were spent in cabin homes on small clearings in the woods of northwestern Kentucky. These clearings were on farms which his father owned. The father seems to have moved from one farm to another two or three times during those eight years. Abraham's father, Thomas Lincoln, a pioneer carpenter and farmer, being himself the son of a pioneer, had had no opportunities for education, and could neither read nor write. But Miss Tarbell, who has investigated the history of the Lincoln family, tells us that he had no bad habits, was temperate and honest, a church-goer, had advanced ideas about the rights of men, and believed slavery to be wrong. He is also said to have been an agreeable, friendly man, and a wonderful story-teller. Lincoln's mother was a woman of better education than most of the pioneer women of that time, had high ideals, and was ambitious that her children should be educated. Their cabin homes were like those of other pioneers of the time. Lincoln had a sister older than himself and a brother younger. The little brother died before the family left Kentucky, and the boy Lincoln, in deep sympathy with his mother, had his first taste of sorrow. The mother taught the children to read, and during Lincoln's fifth and also during his sixth year, the neighbors clubbed together and hired a teacher to keep a school for two or three weeks in an old cabin. A speller was the only textbook used, and Lincoln, the youngest boy in the school, was always at the head of his class. He had to help with the work at home both indoors and out. During these years he heard travelling backwoods preachers a few times, and admired them so much that he tried to imitate them and preach sermons to the family at home. These were his first lessons in public speaking.

During Abraham's eighth year his father went across the Ohio River up into Indiana, into a region still more wild than northwestern Kentucky, bought a piece of land in the woods, and moved his family there. Here the next thirteen years of Abraham Lincoln's life were spent. It is interesting to notice that the move was to the North instead of to the South—that it was from a slave state into a free state, and toward the center of western population where the Great Emancipator was to complete the training and

gain the endurance that should prepare him for the responsibilities he was to bear.

The family arrived at their new home in the woods in November, and there was no cabin home to receive them, and no clearing on which to build one. So they camped under trees until Abraham and his father could clear a space, cut trees, and build what they called a "half-faced camp." This was a kind of three-sided shed, and the side under the lower eaves faced the south and was left open. Big fires were kept burning in front, and this, with the help of the sun and the shelter of the woods, kept the occupants fairly comfortable except in time of hard storms or severe cold. Here the family lived through the winter and until the next October, when a new cabin was built. During this winter in the open camp Abraham helped his father clear the land, learned to write, studied the Bible and the life of Henry Clay, a little book in pamphlet form which they had brought with them from Kentucky. The book told how Henry Clay, the poor "mill boy of the slashes" had worked his way up and become a great man and a statesman. Henry Clay became Lincoln's ideal. He admired and loved the great man, and resolved that he too would make every effort to improve himself and to rise in the world.

Settlers rapidly flocked into the new state, and a little town called Gentryville started into life about two miles from the Lincoln farm. In the autumn of his ninth year a terrible sorrow came to the boy. His mother died and the family were left desolate. The sister tried to keep house, and the children often wept at their mother's grave. The next year the father went back to Kentucky and brought back a new wife. She brought into the home much of what seemed to the children fine and wonderful furniture, much love for the motherless boy and girl, much comfort and order and cleanliness. She had two children, a boy and a girl, so the size of the family was doubled.

Meantime Abraham was mastering arithmetic, reading Aesop's Fables, and borrowing every book to be had for miles around. Among the rest he obtained a Life of Washington which had almost as great an effect on him as the book about Henry Clay. He resolved to be manly, to do his best, and to have a good education.

When he was thirteen a new school house was built in the neighborhood and he had a few weeks in a better school than those he had attended in Kentucky. Two years later there were a few weeks more of school in the same school house, and at the age of seventeen years he, for a time, walked nine miles a day to attend school. He one day walked twelve miles to secure a book on the laws of Indiana and pored over it until it was mastered. During part of these years a debating club was held in Gentryville, and Abraham often attended and took part. He quickly became one of the most interesting debaters in the lyceum. His out-of-door life and his almost continual use of the ax helped to make him remarkably strong. One of his biographers says, "He could outlift, outchop, and outwrestle any man in the settlement." After the family moved to Indiana he received much valuable training and knowledge of how to get along with people and make and keep friends by working out among the neighbors at all kinds of odd jobs when he was not needed at home. His father usually made the bargain, and always, according to law and custom, received the wages. It was in this way that, in about his seventeenth year, he took his first lessons in geography, not from a book, but from nature itself. His father hired him out to a man who lived down on the Ohio River and owned a ferry boat. Lincoln was to run the boat and do other work, and receive his board, and two and a half dollars a week. He learned all it was possible for a boy to find out about the river, the different kinds of boats, where they came from and where they went, and the towns at which they stopped. He especially loved to watch and get information about the large boats going north to Cincinnati and Pittsburgh, and south to St. Louis and New Orleans. Perhaps he saw a good deal of the bad effects of whiskey drinking too, for he wrote a composition on "Temperance" which was published in a newspaper in Ohio. He also wrote one on "National Politics" which a lawyer to whom it was shown declared "the world couldn't beat." He borrowed all the books he could get, and worked hard at all odd times trying to improve his education. When the river froze up his job was gone and he walked back to his home in Indiana. But he was now more eager than ever to learn about the world and its

people. During the winter he made a flatboat of his own, which in the spring he floated down to the great river again and earned his first dollar with it by carrying two passengers and their trunks out in midstream to a waiting steamboat. The next year he was engaged by Mr. Gentry, keeper of a store at Gentryville, to help run a flatboat filled with corn, pork, and other products to New Orleans. He was to have his board and money to pay his passage back on a steamboat, and his father was to have two dollars a week during the time he was at work. He made the trip safely, learned much of the geography and people of part of the United States, saw many new sights, and took a keen interest in everything. After this, until he was twenty-one, he worked at anything he could find to do, on the home farm or among the neighbors, always turning his wages over to his father.

On February 12, 1830, Abraham Lincoln was twenty-one years of age. But his father was preparing to leave the Indiana farm which had been his home for thirteen years, and Lincoln thought it his duty to help the family until they were moved and settled in their new home. Some of their relatives had gone up into Illinois and settled. They liked it so much that they were writing the Lincolns to sell out their home and come, and they had at last decided to do so. This move, again, by a providence which probably none of them recognized, took them in a favorable direction for the young Lincoln's future activities. The family started out in March, camped out on the way, and were two weeks on the journey. After they arrived at their destination at a place in the woods near Decatur, Lincoln helped his father until a cabin was built, some land cleared, and crops planted, and then he struck out for himself.

His first problem was to get some clothes, as he had none that were fit to appear in away from home. He gladly accepted an opportunity to split fourteen hundred rails in exchange for a pair of trousers, after which he worked among the neighbors at any job he could find to do, always studying law and reading at every spare moment. The next year, at the age of twenty-two, he was engaged by a Mr. Offut whom he had met to make another flatboat trip down the Mississippi to New Orleans. It was on this trip that

he saw negroes chained in gangs and sold at auction, and gained his undying hatred for human slavery. The trip was successful, and on his return Mr. Offut engaged him to work in his store in New Salem, not far from Springfield, now the capitol of the state. Lincoln was glad to work in the store as it gave him more spare moments for the study of law. He made the store an interesting place, acted as peace-maker in village squabbles, and gained a wide reputation for being strictly honest. He borrowed a grammar, and learned its rules by heart, and worked harder than ever over his law books. In his twenty-third year Lincoln announced himself as a candidate for the legislature. He had for some time been a close reader of Henry Clay's newspaper, the *Louisville Courier*, and was much interested in politics and well versed in the leading questions of the day. But about this time Mr. Offut failed in business and closed his store. Lincoln was again out of employment. A few days after the closing of the store news came of the breaking out of the Black Hawk war. Lincoln enlisted, and was chosen captain of his company. He served for three months and gained much valuable experience as a leader of men. After being mustered out he re-enlisted as a private soldier and served till the close of the war.

When he reached home it was nearly time for the election. Urged on by his friends Lincoln sent out handbills and made several speeches. Lincoln was running on the Whig ticket, but in the election he received every vote from both Democrats and Whigs in his own town of New Salem, but was defeated in the other parts of the state, the "only time he was ever defeated by the votes of the people." After this he had a little more experience as a store-keeper and was much called upon to write mortgages and other documents, to give legal advice, etc. He was appointed postmaster at New Salem and was also asked by the county surveyor to act as his assistant. He immediately procured a book on surveying, and, with a little help from a schoolmaster, was ready in six weeks to take up the work. This work took him over a large part of the state and brought him in contact with all sorts of people and gave him an opportunity to make hundreds of friends.

The next year, 1834, Lincoln's twenty-fifth year, he was elected to the Illinois legislature, and his career as a public man was begun. He was re-elected in 1836, 1838, and in 1840, and would have been elected again in 1842 if he had been willing to run as a candidate. When Lincoln was a barefoot youth in buckskin trousers and coonskin cap, walking home from Boonville, with the determination in his heart to become a lawyer, he hardly dared speak of it for fear of being laughed at. When he was twenty-seven years of age it was an accomplished fact, all through his own determination and exertions. In that year he settled in Springfield, Illinois, and began the practice of law, and soon became, and remained for many years, the leading lawyer of the Illinois bar. At the age of thirty-three he was married to Miss Mary Todd, of Kentucky, and they made their home in Springfield where his practice was, and where he was serving in the legislature. At the age of thirty-seven he was elected to the Congress of the United States. Great movements were stirring in the heart of this nation, movements that were destined to grow more and more important and divide the people into two such hostile camps that the very existence of our country would be threatened. The great Lincoln, watchful, thoughtful, devoted to his country, seemed to grasp the whole situation, to have his "ear to the ground," and to see with prophetic vision far into the future when all around him were still blind. In spite of the fact that he was so lately sprung from the soil, the people seemed somehow to have an instinctive trust in his wisdom, and to be disposed to give him more and more power to control and guide. In 1856 the Republican party of Illinois was formed, and Lincoln became its leader; in 1858 came on the Lincoln-Douglas debates which made him famous throughout the nation as an orator, and in 1860 he was made President of the United States by the largest electoral vote any President had ever received. There followed the four terrible years of our Civil War, during which he guided safely our great Ship of State through the storm, and freed the slaves. On the ninth of April, 1865, General Lee surrendered to General Grant, the war was ended, and the Union saved. On the evening of April 14, five days later, the great President himself

gave to the country the "last full measure of devotion" when he met death at the hand of an assassin. The entire nation bowed its head in grief, and the whole civilized world joined in the mourning.

#### A LIST OF BOOKS ABOUT LINCOLN

In the preface to Whitney's *Life of Lincoln* it is stated that in the year 1906 a list of 1,106 books and articles about Lincoln had been collected, and since that time many more have been written. A few of these are given below. Many other interesting and profitable ones might be given.

*Abraham Lincoln*, Charles Carleton Coffin.

*The Children's Life of Lincoln*, A. L. Nicolay.

*The Story of Lincoln*, Mary S. Hamilton.

*The Story of Abraham Lincoln for Young Readers*, James Baldwin.

*Life of Lincoln*, 2 vols., Morse.

*Abraham Lincoln*, James Baldwin.

*Life of Lincoln*, 2 vols., H. C. Whitney.

*The True Story of Abraham Lincoln*, E. S. Brooks.

*The Perfect Tribute* (fine), Mary Shipman Andrews.

"John Burns of Gettysburg." (A poem. Not about Lincoln, but should be read with this study.)

"Oh Captain, My Captain." (Poem about Lincoln's death. Fine.) Walt Whitman.

"The Last Leaf." (One of Lincoln's favorite poems.) O. W. Holmes.

#### NOTABLE TRAITS OF LINCOLN GLEANED FROM HIS BIOGRAPHERS

Kindness to any and all living things.

Subject of his first composition, "Cruelty to Animals."

He was inordinately fond of books.

"The only one of the boys at school who saw that the way to rise in the world was by hard labor and by getting knowledge."

"If he heard of a book anywhere in the settlement he could not rest until he had borrowed and read it."

"After reading the *Life of Washington* he resolved to study hard, do everything thoroughly, lead a manly life, and get a good education."

"He had none of the bad habits that were common to young men in new settlements. He did not use tobacco, or drink strong liquor, or bet on cards, or impose upon the weak and helpless, or quarrel with those who tried to wrong him."

"Although during the greater part of his life he had been in constant contact with rudeness and vulgarity, yet his manners were free from coarseness, and his language from uncleanness and profanity."

"Another quality which adhered to him during his entire life was his good humor, leading to a personal popularity with those with whom he came in close contact."

## GETTYSBURG

*The Battle.*—Gettysburg is a small town in the southern part of Pennsylvania. The greatest and most decisive battle of the Civil War was fought there July 1, 2, and 3, 1863. General Lee, encouraged by a great victory he had lately won over the Union forces at Chancellorsville, decided to invade the North. He swept his army past Washington, and marched them into Pennsylvania. The Union forces under General Meade met and defeated him at Gettysburg. There were fierce fighting and terrible slaughter on both sides. The dead, wounded, and missing of both armies amounted to nearly 50,000 men. Eighteen northern states were represented in the battle, Michigan, of course, being among the number. This battle is often spoken of as the turning-point of the war.

*How the battlefield became a national cemetery.*—As General Lee, after the battle, immediately retreated, and General Meade soon followed him, the care of the thousands of dead was left to the authorities of the state of Pennsylvania. As there were, among the dead, representatives from seventeen states, it was soon decided to ask these states to help buy a portion of the battlefield and to make of it a cemetery where the dead heroes of each state might be suitably buried and their graves honored with memorials. To this the governors of all the states immediately agreed and Gettysburg thus became our first great national cemetery. It has since been taken in charge by the federal government. The

entire battlefield of something like eight hundred acres has been purchased and made into a national park. In this park there are more than five hundred monuments and tablets, and hundreds of small headstones. There is a magnificent national monument, and each state has erected memorials for its own dead. In the cemetery are buried 3,575 bodies of Union soldiers; 1,608 of these have little headstones without names. They are the "unknown dead." Michigan has 172 sons buried there, and 9 beautiful monuments have been erected.



#### MEMORIAL MONUMENT FOR LINCOLN'S GETTYSBURG SPEECH

Said to be the only monument ever erected in honor of a speech. There are brazen tablets on either side of the pedestal. On one of these is engraved the invitation sent to Lincoln to deliver the speech; on the other is the speech.

*The dedication.*—On the day appointed, Thursday, November 19, a great audience assembled at the place prepared for the ceremonies. There were present many soldiers who had been wounded in the battle, and many sorrowing friends of the dead. A procession approached, headed by the United States Marine Band playing dirges for the dead. There were the President and members of his cabinet, heads of departments, members of the Supreme Court, representatives of the civil and military authorities of Pennsylvania and other states. The notables of the day took their assigned places on the platform and the program began. "The orator of the day," says Mr. Hay, "Edward Everett, made a long

address, worthy alike of his own fame and the extraordinary occasion. . . . He ended in a brilliant peroration, the echoes of which were lost in the plaudits of the great multitude, and then President Lincoln arose to fill the part assigned him in the program. It was a trying ordeal to fittingly crown with a few brief sentences the ceremonies of such a day and such an achievement in oratory. . . . But then and there the President pronounced an address of dedication so pertinent, so brief yet comprehensive, linking the deeds of the present to the thoughts of the future in such living, original, yet exquisitely moulded phrases, that the best critics have awarded it an unquestioned rank as one of the world's masterpieces in rhetorical art."

### LINCOLN'S GETTYSBURG SPEECH

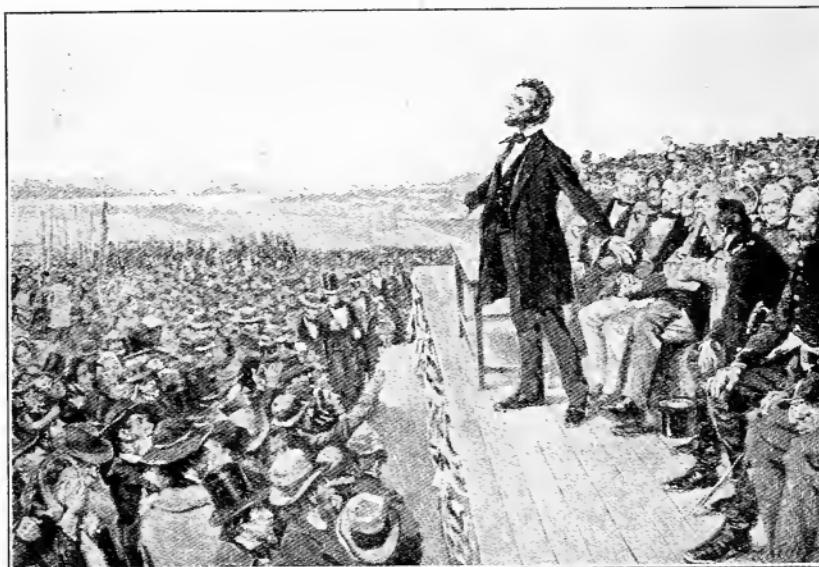
Fourscore and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that a nation might live.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here; but it can never forget what they did here.

It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for

which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.



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#### THE GETTYSBURG SPEECH

"Today that Gettysburg address is enshrined in the heart of the nation as one of America's classics—that is, an utterance that will never die. Let every boy and girl in the land—North and South alike—become familiar with its simple, but noble phrases; for, in the centuries to come, it will stand alone—unique, grand, inspired."—E. S. Brooks.

"The speech that Mr. Lincoln delivered at the dedication of the national cemetery on the battlefield of Gettysburg, November 19, 1863, was at once recognized as the philosophy in brief of the whole struggle, and has already become a classic."—Colonel John Hay.

"Lincoln's Gettysburg Address is one of the three greatest American orations. In England, Oxford University displays it on its walls as a model to show students how much can be said simply and effectively in two hundred and sixty-nine words."—Halleck.

## INTERPRETATION

To dedicate is to devote, or set apart, with solemn rites, to some serious or sacred purpose; to consecrate.

No doubt the great audience, when the President walked forward, expected him to speak words of commendation to those who were making this noble attempt to honor the heroic dead; or perhaps they expected glowing words of praise for those present who were wounded in the battle, or of consolation for those who were sorrowing for their dead. Or perhaps they thought he would attack the South and defend the North, or discuss the future of the war and tell what he thought the end would be. He does, indeed, pay highest eulogy to those who fought in the battle, but not, perhaps, in the way they had expected. With a vision like that of a prophet, he at once lifts their minds above all these confusing little thoughts of the day, and makes them see the battle as a world event—as a struggle affecting not Americans only, but the world and all its peoples. Every wounded soldier, every sorrowing mother, every desolated home or community represented there, if they understood the great President's thought, saw new and sacred meaning in all that struggle and bloodshed and death. He must be brief—the tired audience has already listened to two hours of oratory. His aim in whatever he shall say must be, as had been the aim of all his thinking and doing during all these terrible years of war, to say something here which shall help save the Union. He will try to impress upon these assembled people the importance to themselves and to the world that the Union be saved, and that they, along with him, here "highly resolve" to devote themselves anew to the task of saving it. These people have met here, in tears and sorrow, to honor their soldier dead. He will make them see that the only way really to do that is to take upon themselves the sacred duty of accomplishing the work for which they gave their lives. "Dedication" is the theme of the day—the dedication of this cemetery to the dead. He will make them see three other great dedications, beside which

their little dedication of this field with words and music on this day is merely an incident. His heart glows with a great inward fire of devotion to country and to humanity. As he proceeds it shines out of his face and takes possession of his entire being.

The first sentence of his brief speech sweeps their minds backward in time eighty-seven years to the Declaration of Independence, and the struggle and sacrifice which brought forth and dedicated this nation to its experiment in human liberty. It also, by implication, suggests the long dark centuries before that time, when there was no liberty except for the few, and no equality, but only the oppressor and the oppressed, the ruler and the ruled. Then comes the proud thought that, out of all the world, "our fathers," *our* fathers, made the first successful struggle against this state of things, and bequeathed to this nation, the experiment in human liberty they "had so nobly begun." His next sentence sweeps them back to the present great war, and shows its relation to that earlier struggle of our fathers. An attempt is being made to destroy the nation they founded. If it succeeds their sacrifice will have been in vain. It will be proved that "neither that nation nor any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure." His next sentence comes to the present—to what was first in all their thoughts—their assemblage there and its purpose. He states it clearly. "We are met," he says, "on a great battlefield of that war." And again he shows the relation of this day's gathering to the greater work of saving the Union. He makes them see that the men who were slain in the great battle fought there, the men they have met there to honor, gave up their lives in order that that nation might not be destroyed, that the work of dedicating this ground, of setting it apart as holy, has already been better done by them than it can be done by anyone else, that this bloody battle was fought, and these men buried here died in order that this Union might be saved, and that this experiment in free government might go on, and that their struggle here for this purpose had already made this spot holy ground. He also shows them that the soldiers' work is not yet finished: the Union is not yet saved; and unless it can be saved all these men will have died in vain. They have met there, he says, to honor the dead by dedicating to them forever as a resting-place, this field. But the highest honor they can pay, his words imply, is not simply to dedicate this field—the

best and only way to really honor the dead is to complete the work they died in trying to do. The noblest dedication that can be made is the dedication of themselves to the work of saving the nation at whatever cost, and of carrying on the experiment in human liberty which their fathers began, in order "that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth."

## NOTES

*Style of the speech.*—This speech is given in dozens of rhetorics as an example of almost every desirable quality of style. Among those for which it is said to be noted are clearness, unity, interest, force, elegance, sincerity, etc. Commit thoroughly to memory.

*Outline.*—The best outline of this speech is the speech itself. The statements are so condensed that an outline is merely a poor restatement of the author's words. When committed to memory it outlines itself clearly in the mind.

*Our fathers.*—This expression refers to the signers of the Declaration of Independence and, more broadly, to all who took part in any way in helping to make America a free nation.

*Brought forth.*—The figure of speech in the first sentence, expressed in "conceived," "brought forth," etc., is a metaphor. It refers to the fact of physical birth. It was the wish for a land of greater liberty that made our fathers create this nation, and as a newly born child might be consecrated by its parents to some good work, so this nation was dedicated as a great arena for the working out of greater human freedom.

*New nation.*—New in two senses: new in location and material resources, and new in the principles on which it was founded.

*Created equal.*—Lincoln, in explanation of the meaning of these words once said, "While a negress may not be my equal in all things, in the right to eat the bread which her own hand has earned she is my equal and the equal of anyone else."

*Civil war.*—A war between citizens of the same country.

*That nation . . . . endure.*—Webster also believed that if our nation could not succeed in the experiment of government by the people no nation ever could. In his first Bunker Hill Address he says, "Our history hitherto proves that the popular form is practicable, and that with wisdom and knoweldge men may govern themselves; and the duty incumbent on us is to preserve this cheering example, and take care that nothing may weaken its authority with the world. If, in our case, representative system is a failure, popular governments must be pronounced impossible."

*So nobly advanced.*—After this battle there was little doubt in the mind of anyone as to which side must win in the war.

*Fitting and proper.*—A favorite expression with Lincoln.

*Great task remaining.*—None knew better than did Lincoln how great that task would be. The war lasted a year and a half after this time. Then followed the “great task” of reconstruction, of reuniting the torn and divided nation.

*That from . . . . devotion.*—This is one of the most wonderful sentences in the speech, remarkable for its condensation and beauty of thought and language. “That cause” was the saving of the Union. The “honored dead” had, through devotion to the Union, risked and lost their lives. The thought of their devotion, Lincoln thinks, should increase ours.

*By the people, etc.*—An old veteran who fought at Gettysburg and loves this speech was recently heard reciting it with a strong emphasis on the word “people” in the last sentence each time it occurs. Try reciting it in this way.

## QUESTIONS

Which paragraph of the speech refers entirely to the past? Which refers entirely to the present? Which to the past, present, and future? Which one looks forward to, or concerns, the future throughout? What is it to dedicate? Look up in the dictionary. How many years are in a score? In what year was this speech delivered? The expression, “Fourscore and seven,” then, carries the time back to exactly what year? To what particular event in that year does Lincoln refer? And whom does he mean by “our fathers”? In what two ways was this a “new” nation? Find, in the first sentence, at least two reasons why we should wish this nation to be preserved. How many years passed between what is spoken of in the first sentence and what is spoken of in the second? What is a civil war? Which of Lincoln’s sentences do you think brought most satisfaction and comfort to the grieving relatives of the dead? Which to the men there who had been wounded in the battle?

What in the first sentence is spoken of as being dedicated? Who did the dedicating? Tell in some other words than Lincoln’s to what it was dedicated? What in the fourth sentence is spoken of as being dedicated? By whom? To what? What other dedication or consecration has this field had? What is spoken of in his last sentence as being dedicated? By whom? To what? What four dedications, then, does Lincoln speak of? Which is the most important? In which one may we all have a share? What “new birth of freedom” took place in the nation while the war was going on? When? It took place at whose command? Repeat the paragraph of the speech which refers to the past; to the present; to the past, present, and future; the one that looks entirely toward the future.

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